

## **An Occasion to Celebrate**

Under the shade of the Grand Tent CMS employees joined together to celebrate the diversity of our workforce and to “Embrace a Vision of Unity,” the theme for CMS 2003 Diversity Day celebration.

The annual celebration provides the Agency the opportunity to reflect on the contributions of various cultures to our society, recognize the diverse beneficiary population that CMS serves, and heighten awareness of issues and concerns of a diverse culture.

Several hundred employees and invited guests attended the June 11, 2003 event. As in years past, CMS hosted the 2003 celebration on the back parking lot under two giant tents. The festivities began at 9:00 a.m. with the Washington Toho Koto Society playing softly in the lower level lobby area.

The event picked up tempo at 10:00 a.m. Those who arrived early were treated to a lively prelude under the Grand Tent as the local group, Tropicombo, played some sweet salsa music. Several employees, led by OEOCR’s own director, excited the crowd with their salsa dancing prowess.

This year the Fort Meade Joint Services Color Guard proudly presented color to open the event. CMS’s own Gina Daniels then provided a rousing performance of the national anthem, and the CMS Choir then performed a couple of lovely patriotic selections.

Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer (*title ?*) Leslie Norwalk welcomed the audience and invited guests to the celebration and introduced the first speaker for the 2003 Diversity Day event, Ms. Felicita Sola-Carter, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources at the Social Security Administration.

Following Ms. Sola-Carter’s remarks the Sankofa Dance Theater, an African dance troupe based in Baltimore, rejuvenated the gathered crowd with several enthusiastic drumming and dance selections.

The Diversity Day celebration also served as the closing activity for the inaugural class of the *Student Career Academy Youth Initiative*, a joint venture with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Patterson High School of Baltimore City Public Schools. This partnership was

formed to help satisfy the demand for a skilled future workforce and to reach those students who could be favorably impacted by intervention.

Through an educational model developed in the spirit of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, the Student Career Academy Youth Initiative serves to stimulate students to continue academic studies and acquire the knowledge and skills needed for success in either the workplace or postsecondary education.

The ceremonial closing allowed Academy students the opportunity to celebrate with their mentors from CMS and their Job Coaches from the VA. Retired Army Lt. Colonel Consuelo Kickbusch provided the keynote remarks for the Academy closing, encouraging the young people to take charge of their lives, make a real difference in their families and communities, and to follow a disciplined path on the road to success.

Also attending the closing ceremony and providing remarks were Ms. [redacted] From the Department of Education, Dr. Cassandra Jones from Baltimore City Public Schools; Ms. Laura D'Anna, Patterson High School Principal; and Mr. Armando Rodriguez from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The celebration concluded with everyone enjoying ethnic food samplings from a variety of cultures while Tropicombo again encouraged folks to hit the dance floor as they played.